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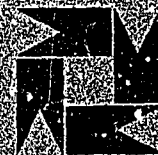
ABSTRACT

The Manhattanville College plan for change is described in relation to grading, credits for graduation, curriculum, and distribution requirements. Specific areas of change include: grading, formal academic advising, board on academic standards, curricular changes, summer sessions, interdisciplinary studies, open-door lecture service, faculty forum, clinics, and self-instruction, off-campus programs and work-study, residential life, open college, and evaluation. This plan is reviewed in the perspective of American higher education. (MJM)

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THE MANHATTANVILLE PLAN

A Report to the

National Endowment for the Humanities

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Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York 10577



Manhattanville College

September 1, 1973

Mr. Ronald Berman, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Mr. Berman:

It is a pleasure to present this report on behalf of Manhattanville College. As a result of the work done in the last two years under the grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the changes in the educational program at Manhattanville are very real indeed.

We know we have gone a long way toward increasing the emphasis on the humanities and their meaning in student lives. At this time in our civilization when major decisions are demanded, it is not enough to have informed citizens; judgements based on values and purposes are required. Our plan has been designed toward the achievement of these goals by our students. The principles which guided the formulation of the plan have continued to guide its implementation. Our foremost concern is for the individual - both the student and the faculty member. In the last analysis education depends on the quality of the encounter between student and teacher and their preparation for it. Learning is the individual responsibility of each student. No one can learn for another.

One stipulation in the grant was a commitment to share results of the effort--the successes and failures--with other institutions. For this reason our report is public and is being sent to other colleges and universities. All too frequently we do not learn from one another. Even more frequently, we seek to

make known only our successful efforts. In this statement, we have tried honestly to point out where the difficulties have been encountered and how we have adjusted to keep the ideal viable in action.

The report is organized in three sections: how the change took place, what the new plan is, and where it fits in American higher education today. Our final report will include detailed evaluation now being conducted by students in the Psychology, Sociology and Mathematics Departments and by professors, administrators and outside consultants. It will be comparative over the period of the grant and available shortly after the termination of the grant in 1974.

Our appreciation to the Endowment for making this possible at Manhattanville.

Sincerely yours,



(Mrs.) Nell P. Eurich
Provost
Director of the NEH Project

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FOREWORD

I have often called the college a "vicinity" — meaning a community of teachers and students, happy in their pursuit of learning and aware, at the same time, of the larger society of which they are a part. It is a vicinity in the process of growth. When I became president in 1966, I envisioned a college that would address itself to the needs of a society numbed by inhumanity. In that year, our country was engaged in the fourth major war of this century. We were conscious of 30 million Americans living in poverty in the midst of unprecedented affluence, of the third world existing in varied stages of deprivation, of the indignities inflicted upon the old, the mentally ill, the victims of alcohol and drugs.

We were aware that no one of these problems was new. I could therefore find little solace in looking to the past. In fact, I said, "Existence comes to us not so much as a given but as a task, a call. Events summon us. We move forward into life, forging new tools, new self-definitions. Seeing things not as they are but as they could be, we project a better world and seek to turn it into reality."

Our world is the world of education, and what we seek to turn into reality is better education. That is what we are about in every classroom, at every faculty meeting, in the faculty lounge over coffee, in the college dining room, wherever we meet. No one of us thinks that the job is easy or can ever be completed, but clearly we are moving in the right direction.

No one believes that education in the Thirties, Forties, Fifties, Sixties was an unchanged replica of education at the turn of the century. Nostalgia for the past is understandable. We all suffer from it. But it is not given to us to leave the past — it recedes from us.

Our concern for change is not for its own sake. Change we must. I am not troubled when our endeavors are characterized as being "revolutionary" or "radical." If they are, so be it. My great fear is that they are not radical enough. I have no interest in retrenchment, in the preservation of the past because it was so good to me — and it was. I will not have been true to Manhattanville College if,

when I leave this institution, it is the same institution to which I came, save for a little tinkering here and a little there to make it seem new. The forces at work in the world are not tinkering — they are massive and powerful. They have taken their form and shape under the stewardship of world leaders in all walks of life — leaders educated in the Thirties, Forties and Fifties. Their education was not good enough; otherwise our world would be more human.

Once more let me say we have few answers — our search is for useful questions. Our responsibility is of the highest order: we work with the young, who will construct the future. We are not discharging that responsibility as well as we might and should. Our search, and it is only a search, is for better ways — ways to instill a love for knowledge, or learning, and for inquiry. How do we stimulate ourselves and our students to ask the radical questions occasioned by man's inhumanity to man? How do we nurture in ourselves and in our students the courage to face uncertainty?

This college is attempting to answer these questions and others. The Manhattanville Plan defines this attempt. We know that we have not found answers but we are confident that we are moving in the right direction.

We have a long journey ahead. My greatest comfort is that the faculty, as I, structured in our past and fortified by our heritage, are eager to face uncertainty and meet it.

The Board of Trustees, the faculty, the students and the administration wish to express appreciation for the grants which made the curriculum development possible at Manhattanville. Special gratitude goes to the National Endowment for the Humanities for the initial grant of \$500,000 and for the additional grant of \$135,000 which was matched. Gratitude also goes to those who gave the matching funds: the Joseph P. Kennedy Family, the Billy Rose Foundation, the International Business Machines Corporation and a trustee of the college.

ELIZABETH McCORMACK, R.S.C.J.
President

August 10, 1973

A CHRONICLE OF CHANGE

Like many institutions confronted by the turbulent second half of the 1960's, Manhattanville College found itself in the midst of changing concepts. Within and without its walls the demands for change were disturbing and insistent. Committed to the liberal arts tradition of humanistic studies, the college sensed the fact that this tradition required modification and development if it were to remain viable in a rapidly evolving, disturbing, questioning world. That some change was needed seemed certain: its extent and direction had to be determined by the intelligent response of the members of the college community.

As society has changed, so too has the campus atmosphere. Student life and customs are dramatically different. Some 270 male students have enrolled in a formerly women's college. Foreign enrollment from Latin America and the Far East has continued. Blacks and Puerto Ricans have come in increasing numbers. The campus has welcomed 350 students at the graduate level: some master's candidates, some nondegree, but all credit-seeking students. "Mornings at Manhattanville," a noncredit liberal arts program for adults, registers an additional 400 each semester from neighboring Westchester communities. Daily student traffic exceeds 2,000 persons and parking lots are overcrowded.

Although growth had occurred, Manhattanville like many other private colleges, found itself with heavy deficits in the late Sixties. Sharp cost-control measures (combined with continued expansion) resulted in a balanced ledger. The tide turned in 1972 and has continued to run in the college's favor so that funds have been available to reduce the existing deficit. At a time when many colleges have had to "freeze" salaries, it is even more noteworthy that Manhattanville succeeded in raising faculty salaries well beyond expectations in the 1972-73 academic year, thanks, in part, to private foundation grants.

These factors enabled the college to initiate some changes in the curriculum and others touching the total milieu, but these would have been impossible without a pilot grant in 1966 from the Na-

tional Endowment for the Humanities for a plan known as Project SHARE, which provided funds and stimulus to activate the process of curricular revision. The design of Project SHARE was to pair a student admitted according to the established criteria with one of 27 urban ghetto students lacking such credentials but offering an enrichingly different background for a year of learning and living together. Their work included creative arts, interdisciplinary-oriented courses and field work. It was a first-year curriculum, encouraging close relationships between faculty and students, and was intended to prepare the disadvantaged student to follow, in subsequent years, the conventional Manhattanville program. Half the Project SHARE students earned their degrees, a heartening achievement, but there were failures in the program that caused faculty and students alike to ask why. Could the traditional, stereotypic student disappear and the curriculum remain untouched? Questioning led to a further reexamination of accepted practice — what should become of the traditional menu of liberal arts courses taught in conventional manner at similar colleges?

In 1969, NEH decided to give additional seed money to encourage a study of the whole curriculum, with the aim of trying to establish a consensus among students, faculty and administrators concerning the meaning of an education in the humanities — broadly defined as liberal arts — in this day and age, and how a small, private college could best provide this. This year-long effort served the critical function of airing some major differences within the college community. Students urged less rigid requirements, closer connection with the world beyond the campus gates, and more flexibility in learning and living styles. Faculty members were sympathetic to these demands but feared that piecemeal acquiescence would lower standards and weaken the faculty's rightful place in the college hierarchy. Concerned with both positions, the administration faced a strained budget, rising costs, increased competition from public institutions and the need to keep educational goals clearly in mind.

The various groups did not join hands without acrimony. Nevertheless, frankness and direct communication prevailed, resulting in the attainment of two goals. First, the publication on campus of a

compendium of faculty opinion on what was wrong at Manhattanville and what should be done to correct it obligated respondents to stand behind their views on change. Some were distressed at having their views made public and perhaps their permission should have been sought, but in retrospect this air-clearing and statement of personal positions seems worth the price of temporary annoyance. Education—like society—cannot change by secret ballot alone; it requires that difference of opinion be openly and clearly stated.

Furthermore, the document highlighted the variety of ideas present on campus concerning the definition of a good liberal arts education. Most became convinced, if they had not already been, that nothing less than a comprehensive examination of the entire college program was needed. It was reasoned that patchwork change might well be worse than no change at all.

It is interesting to note at this point that there had been little evidence collected in the form of statistical studies or other accepted methods by which programs could be evaluated. The college had no educational research and development office. Thus philosophic and subjective questioning gave rise to decisions preceded by an honest self-analysis and recognition that existing answers were not adequate. One faculty member, who had attended a conference where change was the topic, remarked, "If progress is bowing gracefully under pressure, this faculty is progressing."

Students were asking the same questions at comparable colleges and universities. Across the country, many of the best students were moving to newly created institutions with no inherited patterns. Foreboding signs were there for all to see: rising costs forcing tuition higher and higher, pricing the college out of the market; the construction of nearby low-tuition public institutions ready to enroll students who might otherwise have attended private colleges; the changing tastes of modern college students; the uneasiness in academe caused by too many faculty for the few available positions.

For those who did not hear this message, Manhattanville's president made it clear in 1970: if the college did not initiate some drastic changes, there was the real possibility it might have to close its doors within five years. Slight increases in tuition and enrollment,

as shown in budget projections, simply could not counter the costs, and there was no endowment cushion. Economic pressures, built realistically from within, were thus added to the mix for change.

Equally important to this mix was the institution's strong leadership, willing to support whatever reforms were judged necessary to set the college on a satisfactory course for the future. Manhattanville had successfully demonstrated its ability to keep basic goals firmly in mind and not to allow itself to be distracted by side issues of "method" and "system." For more than a half-century it had offered a liberal arts program, with stress in the humanities, that met all qualifications of strong education as laid down by accrediting associations and by New York State and the federal government. Now again Manhattanville's president was urging the college community to examine its purpose and programs, and not be afraid of "knocking down walls." This was a call to change — not simply for the sake of change, but to preserve the essence of the college.

In the Spring of 1970, the faculty, in cooperation with students, began the demolition process. Recognizing the rigidity that had set in with quantitative requirements, they struck at the core of the problem by removing the obstacles. They abolished set numbers of points or credits for graduation; they abandoned distribution requirements. They eliminated the five-course load for students, realizing that a full load would differ for individuals. The cumulative grade average and credit system (which equates Mary Jane with 3.87) was banished from the transcript. The basic requirements of residence, work in the major field and a "program of study broadly distributed through the undergraduate curriculum" remained when these efforts at housecleaning were finished.

Rebuilding started carefully and gradually. A preceptorial program was inaugurated for students entering in the Fall of 1970. The faculty-preceptor was given a large order to fill: both mentor and guide, he was to introduce the freshman to the resources of the college, assist in his academic decisions, provide remedial work where necessary, teach the skills of research and writing, and prepare a written evaluation summing up the student's educational progress. These evaluations were not given a grade equivalency. The precep-

torial took place in the setting of a seminar-structure, limited to small numbers, and was directed toward a subject matter currently of particular interest to the preceptor. Each freshman selected such a "course" from a list of 31 which represented all but two departments of the college. Faculty were enthusiastic and many volunteered for the program.

Results at the end of the year's experiment were generally favorable, but trouble spots were apparent, basically because of inadequate advance planning. Some preceptorials achieved the desired fusion of student-centered study programs with personalized instruction and guidance. Others were preceptorials in name only, remaining, in fact, traditional freshman-level courses. It was also found that basic instruction in the languages did not lend itself to this pedagogical approach; daily lessons required routine learning that did not lead to exploration of the student's wider interests and the development of his intellectual opinions. Further, the preceptorials became a mixed bag when upperclassmen talked their way into them. The resulting amalgam of well-prepared student with beginner was found desirable by some but not by others. Upperclassmen have since been excluded.

One major salutary effect was seen in a sharp increase in the use of the library, which assumed a major place in the learning experience of preceptorial students. Librarians, who had complained in the past that their services and books were not sufficiently utilized, now found themselves called on to explain research techniques, assemble bibliographies, unearth information and teach students to use these techniques independently. The net count of pros and cons on the preceptorial program is shown in its survival: with much more clearly defined objectives, the program progressed through its third year in 1972-73.

In spite of this less-than-perfect record, members of the college recognized that preceptorials came close to reflecting the concepts faculty and students had agreed upon as central to their philosophy of education. They held four principles basic to a good liberal education:

1. That it be personally oriented and shaped (not all students

studying a common set of prescribed subjects selected by the faculty) .

2. That the curriculum be regarded as a resource (not as a measuring stick or an obstacle course) .
3. That the relationship between faculty and student is primarily academic (not a social, buddy system) .
4. That learning opportunities appropriate to an undergraduate education are many and varied (not all encompassed in the classrooms of one institution during an inflexible four-year period) .

These principles were developed into a proposal wide in its scope, projecting the restructuring of the curriculum and the effects of this on student experience and learning. In essence, the proposal stressed integrated knowledge and humanistic values and concerns. The National Endowment for the Humanities funded the program for three years in the amount of \$500,000, with the possibility of an additional \$100,000 in matching funds. Manhattanville's president overmatched in the short time allowed, and the college had \$770,000 to assist in the creation of a new program. A detailed plan on which the college would operate was to be evaluated carefully and the results shared with other institutions of higher learning.

A new full-time director for the project was employed — Nell P. Eurich, formerly dean of faculty at Vassar College. She spent three months talking with representatives from the college population, collecting ideas, information and hard statistics, including an evaluation of preceptorials which revealed their strengths, problems and faults. In the Spring of 1971, a Curriculum Conference of 88 faculty and administrative officers and 14 students was held at Arden House in Harriman, New York, to discuss in general terms the means of carrying out the proposal's principles.

Following the conference, the director invited four faculty members (from the English, History, Mathematics and Religion Departments) and two students to start work immediately after graduation on a study that would produce recommendations for a new program for the college. Since three of the four faculty members were not tenured and since they were not elected by the faculty at large, there

was some criticism, but assurance was given that all proposals would come to the full faculty through appropriate committees in the Fall, at which time the plan or its parts could be rejected, changed or adopted. This was a working, recommendatory group, not a decision-making body.

This procedure may well be one of the crucial factors in a story of change. To achieve a program with consistency of purpose, it was vital that it be drafted by a few heads, rather than by many. Participatory democracy is best exercised in voting on a proposal, not in its original formulation. The inclusion of too many participants at the initial, concrete planning stage has been a major stumbling block in many efforts at educational reform. Either nothing happens or the product is fragmented and chaotic and thus cannot muster intelligent, responsible support. This misinterpretation of participatory democracy is not limited to academe; wherever it occurs, it brings with it inaction and near anarchy.

To be sure, the thoughts of many had been, and, indeed, must be, obtained. Some faculty-student committees had submitted detailed and practical recommendations. These were "on the table" as catalyst and reference for the small task force to use as plans were developed. The group started with one assumption and one rule: there was no existing arbitrary set of guidelines — no catalogue — for Manhattanville that had to be followed, and no one in the group could represent his field of specialization. He was to speak as an educator, not as an advocate for a discipline.

Meetings were held each morning, five days a week, for two months, and individuals wrote drafts of recommendations every afternoon for discussion the next morning. As this process of writing and talking went on, each person discovered his area of greatest concern and devoted major effort and thought to it.

The group avoided a restatement of goals. The task was to consider principles already stated and to develop plans to implement them. Efforts were made to avoid the semantic, platitudinous pitfalls of college bulletins and philosophical polemics. Concentrated attention was given to producing a viable fresh concrete program for students.

Still there was an uneasiness with the simplicity — albeit the far-reaching nature — of the four basic principles. A more explicit definition was needed, against which the adequacy of an idea could be judged. No “bright” idea should be recommended unless it applied directly to the purpose. Thus each person wrote a statement of objectives for a liberal arts education. The composite reinforced the earlier statement of the faculty and students but elaborated on it as follows:

1. Foremost concern is for the individual — both the student and the faculty member. In the last analysis, education depends upon the quality of the encounter between student and teacher and their preparation for it.
2. Learning is the individual responsibility of each student. No one can learn for another. Each will have his own abilities, his own design, his own methods, his own pace for learning.
3. The faculty and the resources of the college are aids in the process of learning.
4. The process of learning continues through life. Though one may concentrate development in a three or four-year period, a measure of its effectiveness will be its continuation as a process and enrichment for life.
5. The process of learning extends beyond the walls of classroom and college, beyond the boundaries of the purely intellectual community. Society at large offers opportunities for continuous, direct experience and the acquisition of knowledge. Education, within the social context, expresses its concern for the issues of society and the world.
6. Education is interpreted broadly to embrace self-knowledge and creative self-expression, as well as academic learning. Thus the total life of the student in its academic, residential and cultural aspects becomes the concern of the college.

The Summer task force quickly established a pattern for its investigations. The atmosphere was that of an informal laboratory — an air-conditioned room (essential for staying power), with a table for meetings and discussions, an active coffee pot, storage space for volumes of internal papers, reports from other institutions, books on

reform and samples of new learning material that grew as the Summer proceeded.

After sketching in outline a particular issue, i.e., a brief past history, special problems and relation to college goals, one member of the group prepared a draft of findings and recommendations. During this stage appropriate and diverse representatives of the college were invited to present their suggestions, orally or in writing.

Towards the end of July the drafts became chapters and the process of preparing a cohesive plan was underway. Recommendations were made only if there seemed to be general agreement in the group. Other ideas were included in the appendix if they seemed to warrant consideration but did not yet have firm support. Each part was checked against a goal. Was the operational recommendation a way to achieve one of the goals? If not, there was no place for it in the plan.

By mid-August, the draft of the new plan was sent to all faculty and to 27 students who had volunteered to serve as critics. Each person was asked to record his criticism and corrections. In cases of negative reaction, a better proposal was to be made or the premises restated with a new solution. The plan proved its merits in this test, as few of the 150 faculty members and students proposed new concepts.

In the early Fall of 1971 another conference was held, this time at Tarrytown House in Tarrytown, New York, and the plan was discussed again by the full faculty, some administrators and students. Several found it incredible to learn that the plan was adjustable. They had feared it was a *fait accompli*, with financial pressure its justification. At the end of the sessions, the director of the project stated that certain parts of the proposal were obviously not acceptable to the faculty and required more study. These had to do with recommendations for preceptorials, interdisciplinary studies and graduate programs. As a result, these specific sections were held out for further analysis, while the bulk of the 200-page report went to the faculty's Academic Policy Committee for the formulation of specific proposals for faculty action.

Much credit must be given to the leadership of this committee for

the fact that the Manhattanville Plan is now in effect. Basic legislation was passed by the faculty during the Fall months, and action was completed by Spring of 1972. The first two classes were to start on the new plan in the next Fall term, and the upper two classes were given the option of completing their work under the old system or joining the new one. Within two years, under this arrangement, all undergraduates would be on the new plan.

Evaluation is underway, as it must be in a changing system, but it is remarkable that a new plan is actually in operation so soon after its genesis. Although the job is not yet done nor all problems solved, the college community does lay claim to having created an attitude open to change, an innovative spirit and a willingness to work together to improve teaching and learning. The decision was made that it is better to err on the side of action than inaction and that only in "the doing" could a plan prove its worth.

In Manhattanville's case this attitude did not spring from any single source or magic formula, but from a mixture of five ingredients.

First, an unfocused *dissatisfaction* among members of the college with various aspects of the *status quo* revealed, as a result of a small experiment for disadvantaged students, a basic questioning of standard practices and their philosophical foundations.

Second, there was awareness that — no matter what Manhattanville's inner turmoil — *outside pressures* could force the college to close its doors if action was not taken and taken soon. Financial disaster was not a vague threat looming on a distant horizon, but an immediate possibility.

Third, *strong leadership* and courageous judgment determined to move the college into its next era of development.

A fourth ingredient, influenced to some degree by the first three, was the *financial support* of the National Endowment for the Humanities. While college presidents, pressed to the wall by their own financial crises, may be tempted to think this "ingredient" outweighed the other three, they will remember that experience overwhelmingly indicates that money, by its simple presence, without other factors, does not automatically produce a better educational

environment. Those wanting further proof of this assertion have only to read the history of the affluent early 1960's. Money does not guarantee improvement but, for better or for worse, improvement often dies or is never born for lack of money.

Last and most important was the ability of *faculty and students* to consider the issues critically and honestly and then make the necessary hard decisions. This combination of levers for change has been effective. But the process has only just started. Constant evaluation will reveal mistakes and weaknesses, the possible and the impossible; it will identify where the college has been unduly ambitious or idealistic. Adjustments will undoubtedly be needed, perhaps even new directions established. Educational institutions, by the very nature of their purpose, can only be centers for the unending search for truth and better ways to seek it.

THE MANHATTANVILLE PLAN

"Whereas the college recognizes and confirms the need for a fuller and more precise qualitative evaluation of the academic achievement of its students, namely, that each student demonstrate a critical faculty, independence of mind, competence in at least one field of humanistic studies, be it resolved that the college require, as a condition of the awarding of the degree, that each of its students present a portfolio containing the following evidence of the student's achievement"

So reads the preamble to the first major piece of legislation enacted by the Manhattanville faculty in a series of proposals that installed the college's new plan. The portfolio referred to above — physically, a simple red folder with an elastic band around it, selected to fit an ordinary file cabinet — is central for several reasons. It is the individual student's record of qualitative achievement; his best work, in other words. The evidence requested defines the abilities sought in graduates from this liberal arts college. Hopefully, the requirements represent the essentials for a liberally educated person. At the least, they constitute a solid base for development in that direction.

Each requirement then serves one or more of the stipulated goals stated earlier in this report. Examples of substantive work in the portfolio are to show the student's ability to present a reasoned critical approach to the subject at hand, his mastery of bibliography, techniques of research and method of inquiry. Without these abilities one can hardly go on learning after a few college years and certainly one cannot sift the evidence and take an informed position on issues crucial to our lives and our world.*

Similarly, evidence is required of independent study on the part of the student, again supporting the objective of continued learning after departure from the college and stressing the importance of student initiative and responsibility in learning.

Certification of completion of the work in a major field by the department or by faculty directing students in self-designed concentrations is required. In this "requirement," the need for depth is

*Goals four and five, as stated on page 14, are served by this requirement.

recognized. In order to maintain the concept of liberal arts—knowledge in several fields — the student will present evidence of strength beyond the introductory level in two or more areas of study. Areas are not specified as divisions, i.e. social sciences, humanities. Instead they are interpreted as disciplines of substantive difference. In this requirement, one may read a new statement of the traditional “distribution requirement” but with the sharp difference of permitting the student choice of fields and hence opportunity to relate various subjects to his personal interests, talents and objectives. This element in the portfolio implemented the faculty legislation of Spring 1970 intended to maintain the “concept” of distribution as a key aspect of a liberal arts education.

Most important is the decision to require an active attempt by the student to relate his own field of special interest to a wider intellectual or human context. Students are asked to consider their own personal learning in terms of its purpose and possible contribution to others. Too frequently in colleges and universities, learning, whether on the undergraduate level with highly individualized focus or on the graduate level with excessive specialization, can become selfish and narcissistic. Thus this requirement. This is an unusual feature of the plan intended toward the goal stated: “Education, within the social context, expresses its concern for the issues of society and world.”

“Evidence” of these strengths, of achievement and learning, may take several forms: papers, exams, a lecture, film, thesis, research project or field work report, photographic record of art work, reference to a tape (which the Board on Academic Standards may request to hear), critiques of recitals or concerts. Creative students are recognized as well as those who choose to work in the more established patterns.

The portfolio, then, is the student’s private record of accomplishment during his years of study, and it becomes his property upon graduation. In it are written evaluations from teachers of the preceptorial and small courses — seminars — in which the teacher may really know the student, his problems, contributions and work. In it also are written annual evaluations prepared and signed by the

student and his adviser, summarizing general progress in the past year of learning. These constitute the continuing overall evaluation of the student's progress toward his goals and his accomplishments over the course of any given year.

As one faculty member put it, "This kind of guided self-evaluation, like the portfolio, through which the student presents his best work, represents a significant advance from the passive approach to evaluation in more traditional systems." To assist in this, the student, by the end of his first year, constructs an educational plan for the three- or four-year program, listing course choices and stating a rationale — the purpose for his plan. He may adjust it as he learns. It is a working document to encourage discussion with his adviser and the selection of courses to further his goal.

Still, there is the insistent question of the public record, the future employer or that monolithic monster hovering over the young learner — the graduate school. So, a compromise with reality and subsequent affairs of life: the portfolio also includes the usual transcript. Customary practice is adhered to; the transcript is the only official document going out of the college.

Grading

Another traditional, perhaps imperative, element remains; grades for all courses taken (except the preceptorial). While there are strong arguments for removing the competitive attitude toward learning and the punitive aspects of grading, realistically a human being does need to recognize where he stands in relation to the achievements of others and to the standards expected by the professor. The record is most helpful for further advanced study when it shows levels of accomplishment and general proportions of work done at a high or average level.

Difficulties in grading are well known: judgment on the part of the professor is finally the arbiter. Analysis of the distribution of grades was more indicative of discrepancies in grading standards among departments and even individuals than it was of real student performance. A strikingly high percentage of marks B or above was found. Regardless of the selective admissions policy, was it possible

to have such general brilliance in the student body?

With these and other factors in mind, the decision was to move to Honors, High Pass, Pass, No Credit. It was also still possible for students to take some courses on a Credit/No Credit basis (the old Pass/Fail). Faculty hoped this change away from the former letter grade, with the plus and minus often used to cover indecision, meant at a minimum that a fresh start would be made and more sensitive evaluation might result. Students in the upper two classes which were not in the plan were given the option of retaining the traditional letter grade system. The coexistence of two methods of evaluation, however, inevitably led to confusion.

Extensive review by faculty and students after one year of this dual grading system found it wanting. A principle concern was that admissions officers of graduate and professional schools could not or did not want to interpret Honors, High Pass and Pass, and that the applicant for postgraduate study from Manhattanville might be at a handicap. Thus the faculty voted in 1973 to change the grading system, to A, B, C, D and No Credit. There will be one system for all students. Instructors are given the option also of awarding B+ and C+. A student may opt for Credit/No Credit in place of the letter grades.

In the words of one Ivy League administrator, "No faculty worth its salt can go more than four years without re-arguing its grading system." Manhattanville's faculty, it is obvious, has its share of sodium chloride. More significant, here, however, is the fact that the faculty and students are unafraid quickly to make revisions when a flaw is spotted in the plan.

Formal Academic Advising

Graduation requirements, defined earlier as portfolio contents, are intended to show abilities the graduate should possess. Departmental requirements remain for the large majority of students (who have not chosen to design their own major). There still is however, the real need to provide strong individual guidance for students. Teachers are more than dispensers of knowledge and compilers of bibliography; they are the architects of the student's house of learn-

ing. Even the most responsible and mature students need assistance in deciding upon their goals and in making the most profitable use of college resources.

It was recognized that there is a tendency to over-teach and that too many courses are offered in the same semester, even in the small liberal arts college. A count showed some 600 courses in two semesters, many with fewer than ten students. The question was obvious: was this sound educational practice or proper use of faculty time and talent?

The answer was to make academic advising a recognized part of the faculty work load and to count it as a half-course or full course to give faculty members the time to do a good job. Owing to varying sizes of departments, a rigid formula was not practical. In some cases assistance had to be given the faculty member in another way, such as added help in conducting laboratory sessions. For preceptors, advising was already part of the work load, since the preceptorial counted as a regular course, one of three the teacher offers in a semester.

Some 44 faculty members served in 1972-73 as preceptors or general advisers. The latter had no more than 25 students each, and they took over after the preceptor had guided students through the freshman year. These faculty all attended a week's workshop in the Summer of 1972 to discuss advising problems and procedures so the new plan could go into effect that Fall in an orderly fashion. Realizing that many of the faculty had little experience in advising, and probably did not know the answers to many questions of procedure, the Summer staff produced an Adviser's Manual, complete with details for operation.

Another aid has been the Curricular Guide, which lists courses with descriptions of their purpose, expectations, general coverage and bibliography. The guide became at once an indispensable tool for advisers. Faculty members see their own courses within the perspective of the whole. The guide goes far beyond conventional catalogue descriptions, which usually are more generalized and often outdated even as the publication emerges from the print shop.

Certain days are designated at the beginning of each semester for

advising; students cannot register without the adviser's approval. Academic advising — shared by so many faculty — is a demanding task, vital to the success of the plan. With a faculty of limited size, this may prove an Achilles heel. As the next two classes of students enter the program, more faculty will be needed to advise and yet not everyone can be effective in this role. Further, it will require more curricular adjustments to accommodate the work load for faculty. General opinion has it that the present advising system is superior to the former procedure, which found four class deans serving the entire student body. It is recognized though, that modifications may be necessary in the current plan, although every effort is being made now to serve the students better and in a way that is essential for their thoughtful development.

Board on Academic Standards

Behind, beside and above the adviser and the student is the Board on Academic Standards, an august body of five faculty, four representing specific curricular areas and one at-large, all elected by the full faculty. The board is the visible and responsible body for maintaining college standards and evaluating the extent to which student work meets these standards. Ultimately, however, standards are set by the quality of students and faculty — their background, work and dedication. Manhattanville hopes that by setting up this body to match college standards against student achievement better standards will result. The board will challenge students to work to the best of their ability, not just hard enough to satisfy fixed requirements. Legislation reads as follows:

"Whereas the college recognizes the need to maintain and constantly strengthen college-wide standards, be it resolved that:

"A Board on Academic Standards be established to review the adequacy and quality of all portfolios and to bring, through the dean, to the attention of the student and the academic adviser involved any inadequacy in a portfolio. The board will review the student's portfolio at the end of the second year [and] again when the student wishes to present himself for a degree."

In the first year of operation, the board determined policies and set dates for review of portfolios.

It has already approved a few portfolios of students requesting a three-year option. The requirements for the three-year degree are the same as the four-year program. Obviously, in such a case, the student must show accomplishment at a high level and faster pace.

The board conducted its first major review of one whole class in June 1973. The final review for graduation will take place six months before the anticipated degree is to be granted, thus giving the student time to correct deficiencies. Such a review of a class will first take place in January 1975. Approximately 250 students will be reviewed in each case and a two-week period will be scheduled for this each January.

This is a time-consuming process but it is the obligation of the smaller liberal arts college to assure the personal attention and standards of excellence that its students deserve. The portfolio, the Board on Academic Standards and the advising system, while undoubtedly not suitable for large institutions, join to provide this kind of education.

It also means, of course, that each adviser and each teacher will phrase with care his comments and advice concerning the improvement of the student. A term paper may go into the portfolio for judgment of adequacy for a particular requirement. It is an added check on accountability for all at Manhattanville.

Curricular Changes

So much for the Manhattanville Plan in its introductory year. Accompanying these structural changes, other curricular reforms of a periodic and even "perfunctory" type have occurred, and several new programs have been inaugurated. Reexamination of departmental requirements in view of new developments in the field and renumbering of courses to identify levels more clearly, enabling students and advisers alike to know the background needed for any course, are part of the regular, ongoing process of curricular development. An analysis of the curriculum often reveals that insufficient attention has been given to the intermediate level — the elementary

and advanced levels being more obvious areas of concern. Yet patently the advanced course can be more advanced and more challenging to all concerned if conducted on a higher level based on previous learning. Most of the college departments have conducted a review of requirements and the levels of work being offered.

Other practical aspects of the curriculum have also been considered. The initial Summer task force pointed out that the large number of courses offered, the small size of the classes and the resulting financially unrealistic student-faculty ratio indicated that departments had to reexamine their offerings and consider alternative forms for what was being conveyed in the standard 14-week classroom experience. These questions were asked:

1. Could this course be given in alternate years?
2. Could this course be given even more effectively in an intensive seven-week session?
3. Could this course be designed as a reading course?
4. Could the material in this course be learned by means of taped lectures or guided self-study?

The results of casting courses in these different forms can increase the opportunity for faculty to teach more and varied courses and for students to learn in more varied ways.

Thanks to such probing, more departments are planning alternate year offerings; 23 half-semester or mini-courses and six reading courses were available in the Fall of 1972. No format is established for reading courses. Some faculty meet with students occasionally; others do not, but require an exam or paper.

Half-semester courses have proven especially suitable for limited studies of a specialized nature, such as Contemporary Issues: Northern Ireland and the African Novel. Students have reported favorably on the more intensive concentration possible, and faculty have indicated satisfaction with this scheduling, which permits variety in offerings without the commitment to offer a course forever. The shorter course can be on a subject of special concern to the teacher in his current research. It can also be an effective period

in which to introduce students to interdisciplinary aspects of subjects such as Psychology and Religion or Conflict: Morality and Law in America.

Summer Sessions

Calendar adjustments have also been made for the Summer months, resulting in three sessions (two overlapping) and thus year-round use of the physical plant of the college. Enrollment jumps in the Summer of 1972 and again in the Summer of 1973 attested to the popularity of the program. As a consequence, there was an increase in much-needed revenue. Expensive buildings should not lie idle and unused even for one month of the year. Beyond the practical and financial gains, however, is the educational service extended through the expanded Summer session and the opportunity presented for new programs that can be tried in the Summer period to ascertain their suitability for inclusion in the regular school year.

For example, the Summer of 1973 saw the introduction of institutes in publishing and journalism. At that time, the college also introduced courses and an integrating seminar on The Quantity and Quality of Life, which dealt with humanistic concerns. The student enrolled could concurrently take a course on Biomedical Discoveries, taught by Robert Veatch and the staff of the Institute of Society; another on Ethics and the Life Sciences, and a course on The Second Genesis, presented by Albert Rosenfeld, the author of the book so titled.

Interdisciplinary Studies

The development of related and comparative studies, an interdisciplinary orientation, has been and will continue to be a major focus for curricular adjustments. However, this cannot be legislated, only encouraged. Initiative rests with the faculty member, his interest and abilities. In the last three years the number of courses taught by two or more faculty members from different fields has tripled, and more individual faculty members have chosen to include other disciplines besides their own in discussing a subject. While this is laudable, such efforts can only be as good as the com-

petence of the individuals, and teachers need time and means to prepare. So a small proportion of the grant from NEH has been allocated for faculty who wish to take additional course work, who need released time, or who require new materials for research and study in order to develop an interdisciplinary course. The faculty member prepares a proposal to accomplish this — in his own way — and agrees to offer the course at the completion of his work. To date seven individuals are so engaged.

This is an opportunity that is limited by the extent of available funds, yet it is most important for the individual's development and teaching, and it is basic if Manhattanville is to continue to build interdisciplinary studies. The college cannot afford two teachers in one classroom as a general practice to compensate for overspecialization. Yet the big issues, the deeply important questions of our lives and world — the proper concerns of mankind in the process of education — are too often neglected or ignored in a fragmented, disciplinary approach. This is a major problem for a college committed to humanistic studies and is a crucial issue in the training of teachers for the lower schools.

The advising system, like interdisciplinary courses and programs, offers a tentative solution to the problem of fragmented learning. A student can be assisted in selecting related courses and so become his own agent for integration. But not all can draw lines of relationships and certainly not the synthesis. It takes a rare talent well beyond mere knowledge but many can be led to consider the possibilities and ask the pertinent questions, even if they cannot perform the synthesis.

Bulwarking Manhattanville's own efforts to develop in these several ways toward broader studies and humanistic considerations has been the presence and assistance of visiting scholars made possible under the NEH grant. Alfred Kazin, Malcolm Cowley and Richard Poirer lectured on specific American authors, comparing their themes with a historical perspective. Another course, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Philosophy*, featured John E. Smith, Carl Hempel, William H. Dray and David Tracy on the philosophy of religion, history, social sciences and education. Students, having

studied selected readings, met and discussed issues with each lecturer.

Charles Feidelson of Yale and Julian Moynahan of Rutgers offered two courses each on the half-semester basis. Robert Phelps, literary author and former publisher, and Henry Margenau, the philosopher of science, taught in the Spring term of 1973. Psychologist Leon Rappoport spent a year as a visiting professor, presenting courses on History and Psychology, War and Peace and Personality Development. Students have had the rich opportunity of studying with these teachers, while the faculty has had additional support, along with the infusion of new personalities and ideas.

Open Door Lecture Series

In the Fall of 1971 a selected group of courses — chosen partly for their variety in subject matter — was announced as open to all in the campus community and in the neighborhood beyond. No charge was made. Among the courses were many regular classes that typically had large enrollments and so were taught primarily by lecture. Since added listeners would not disrupt the method of instruction and since they did not require faculty evaluation no additional work was created for the teachers.

Some new courses were designed for the program. An example is the Gallery Forum, given jointly by the Studio Art and Art History Departments, in which contemporary exhibits in Westchester County and New York City were discussed. Another was offered on Recent Archaeological Discoveries in the Mediterranean, in which leading archaeologists from universities with outstanding personnel in the field participated. The Political Science Department sponsored one course on Politics in Film, which included literary readings; an analysis of content accompanied the film presentations. With greater emphasis on student-directed learning in the new plan, the series was seen as a resource to supplement readings and written papers. In both the Gallery Forum and Politics in Film, students participated in the actual teaching.

For some faculty who had taught primarily in seminars, the series afforded the opportunity to try the lecture method and test its suit-

ability for certain purposes and types of subject matter. A good lecture remains one of the most stimulating learning experiences a student can have. It was also realized in a college with many, small discussion-type courses that these could be balanced financially by increasing the number of lecture courses. When a class size reaches 25 or 30, discussion is already limited by the number involved, and in some small classes professors still lecture. So approaches to teaching continue to be determined by individual talents and creativity, and the suitability of method to the purpose of the class.

Additional reasons lay behind the publicized lecture courses: to share the educational resources of the college with the community, to encourage our neighbors to explore subjects and to learn they were welcome as adult students. Similarly, Manhattanville students were invited to drop in without registration, to attend any or all of the lectures in a course, to hear about a subject that was perhaps new or foreign to them and so to expand their interests and to satisfy curiosity.

This open door policy was an outgrowth of a discussion at the second Arden House Conference (Spring 1971), in which the faculty talked of the advantages of opening classrooms to each other, both for learning more about a subject and for learning more about methods of teaching. One faculty member vowed to take a course from a colleague each term. This was significant not only in attitude but also with respect to the long cherished tradition in academe that classroom doors are closed. The teacher is master and freedom of utterance is at stake. This tradition has sometimes condoned mediocre performance, but that was not the issue at stake. Instead it was the realization of what could be learned — in the subject and its presentation. While the attitude at Manhattanville has always welcomed anyone to the classroom, the invitation had been accepted by colleagues far too infrequently in the past.

Faculty Forum

From that same Arden House Conference came the idea of a Faculty Forum to meet several times during a term for the purpose of letting the teachers know what their colleagues were doing and of

working together on ways to improve teaching at Manhattanville. As the task force had written earlier:

"Certainly teachers as professionals or artists cannot be evaluated by inflexible evaluation forms, any more than grading scales can accurately rate student performance. The best way to encourage good teaching is to expose teachers to different ways of teaching, to let them see what works and what does not, and to encourage them to discuss with their peers various pedagogical techniques such as assignments, measurements, methods and presentation."

The Faculty Forum was to foster this development. It was short-lived! A devoted band of a dozen or so attended the sessions during 1971-72 and outside guests were invited, but its leadership was lost and, as was expected, faculty members were overly busy with many new demands. Talk has begun again about the importance of such meetings, but more structure will be needed in planning programs and scheduling if this is to be done.

Clinics and Self-Instruction

Colleges have long known that students enroll with widely varying abilities in different subjects and in the basics of writing and reading. Manhattanville had already inaugurated special reading courses. The Writing Clinic was the idea of an instructor who found that teaching writing in the classroom was unsatisfactory on a college level. As she pointed out: "Colleges admit students on the assumption — often craftily qualified — that they are able to write sufficiently well to meet the demands of their college courses." When the college compels these students to take a writing course after admitting them, they are resentful, she states, for they see it as another meaningless imposition.

The Writing Clinic was begun in the Spring of 1972 on an informal basis. Students, individually or in groups, often encouraged to do so by faculty members, telephoned for an appointment. The teacher was assisted by four senior students in the Department of English who attended a special weekly session on how to teach writing. At night they acted as student consultants in the residence

halls. At their weekly sessions they discussed their own problems as writers and their standards for good prose. They studied methods of teaching writing that are now used in secondary schools.

Within two months, from 12 to 20 students were participating in the clinic each week. Others dropped in for a week or so to solve particular problems. One, for example, sought training in use of the paragraph, another to work on a children's story that she was attempting to get published. An additional writer's workshop was started in the Spring of 1973. Clearly the need is present and the clinic, a worthwhile undertaking, must be developed further.

A Mathematics Laboratory was started at the same time, with materials for programmed learning in specific aspects of basic mathematics and calculus. This has proved valuable for students with gaps in preparation and for extra drill. Some 30 students took advantage of this in the first term it was offered.

More success has come, as might have been expected, in guided self-instruction in beginning French. Growing from a few students, the Fall semester of 1972 saw 23 enrolled in this course, 22 of whom finished it satisfactorily or better. A course in French Civilization, which combines audio-visual techniques with a text, has been popular with students who can self-pace their learning and individually choose their times for study.

Recently a Library Laboratory was introduced; students are welcome to seek solutions to special problems in research or basic instruction in the use of the library.

Off-Campus Programs and Work Study

The college was already at work toward the fifth goal of the new plan, which defines education broadly to include more than the classroom and campus. In the Summer of 1972, a survey of students engaged in academically related work off-campus revealed that there were a number of projects in progress. Some were in the social sciences. Others, in art history, were working at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York. The Chemistry Department was exploring possibilities for their majors in the Stamford (Conn.) Hospital. The college, however, had no coordinating office for

placement. The Career Planning Office was primarily oriented to assist graduates in job applications.

Today this has been reorganized. Career planning and work study are combined in a new busy office working closely with the academic departments. Some 125 placements are available. Fifty students are actually working on projects carried out in the family courts in Rockland County, Rye Historical Society and a psychiatric hospital. More students are studying abroad and the Academic Advising Office is developing a list of institutions approved for such study.

An increasing number of students in colleges and universities are requesting leaves of absence, some to study in other institutions, others to take time off for less academically centered work or for travel. One of the most effective means of adjustment to the trend — as well as recognition of the academic justification for it — is to expand students' opportunities to apply their learning interests concretely while continuing more abstract study. Realizing the legitimacy of the relationship between on-campus and off-campus work, the college will continue to expand these opportunities and assess their values.

Residential Life

Some progress has been made on the recommendations of the task force for better integration of residential life with the cultural and academic programs of the college. More faculty members either live or have offices in the residence halls; more lectures and informal discussions are scheduled for the lounges. There are now student musical performances, "Music in the Dorms" in each residential hall. In the Spring of 1973 faculty lectures in the halls were organized into a Wednesday Night series.

Still much remains to be done toward this sixth goal of the plan. It has been remarked that the campus is divided architecturally — with classrooms and library on one side and residence and dining facilities on the other. Only the mingling of people can finally bridge the gap: the extended advisory program, the social contact of the preceptor with a small number of freshmen, the faculty in residence and more evening programs staged in residence halls.

All these are means toward the goal, but individual initiative on the part of the students, faculty and administrators remains the key. A second or even master key is the strengthening of communications on campus. This still needs administrative assistance and budgetary support.

Open College

In the Fall of 1971 students proposed the establishment of an experimental Open College to be held during the January interterm. Organized and directed by students, it was to offer them the chance to test the depth and extent of their interest and learning as well as their ability to teach other students. It also offered the option between a long vacation and a rewarding and different kind of learning activity. Academic credit was not usually involved although independent study "credit" was earned by some. The Open College was to be learning on any subject simply for the fun of it.

In January 1972, the first Open College was held with some 124 students taking 22 courses from their peers and a few courses taught by faculty. Astounding success came to a program on Improvisation in the Arts, attended by 3,000 people from the community. In the second year of Open College, more than 300 students took part, with 53 courses offered, ranging from African Dance, Auto Mechanics and Chinese Cooking to courses on Contemporary Novels, Irish Literature, Germany: Problems of Reunification, Introduction to Astronomy and Marxism. In 1973, too, many more social and musical affairs were presented; lecturers spoke on the stock market, legal aspects of the free press, prison reform, African culture, Chinese porcelain, calligraphy and painting. A remarkable collection of classic films was viewed by large crowds and the young lady teaching the course on that subject said: "I had no idea how hard it was to teach and how much preparation was needed." It is interesting to note that among those teaching were freshmen and second-year students.

The main sources of difficulty so far in this program are the lack of continuity between students, the initiative and carry-through in planning, adequate preparation and, of course, funding. Each year

the Open College has barely made it, but still it has succeeded, and considerable numbers of students have gained from the experience.

Evaluation

Evaluative studies have been undertaken on various aspects of the new developments. Some lend themselves to quantitative measurements, some do not. Many reports have not yet been analyzed or summaries of conclusions drawn. Since evaluation will be the final report to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the following are merely areas in which information has been and is being assembled:

Preceptorials: 1970-71, 1971-72, 1972-73

Film Courses: 1971-72

Ten Wednesday Nights: 1971-72, 1972-73

Statistical Studies: Questionnaires given to preceptees (1971-72), incoming freshmen (1972) and adult students (1972-73) — Direction of Mr. Champagne

Senior Survey: Spring 1972 done by Experimental Psychology class (65 students surveyed) — Direction of Mrs. Papanek

Freshman/Junior Survey: Spring 1972 done by Experimental Psychology class (100 students surveyed) — Direction of Mrs. Papanek and Dr. Costa

Tabulation of Faculty Reaction to New Plan: In process — Direction of Mrs. Samuels

Open Door Lecture Series: 1971-72, 1972-73

Report on Factors Contributing to Fall Enrollment for Part-time Undergraduate and Nondegree Students: 1972 — Direction of Mrs. Champagne

Other important data such as student registration patterns, numbers of courses taken and in which departments and areas of the curriculum are being collected quantitatively for 1973. These can now be compared with 1971 and 1972 when such data were first com-

piled. Results will show student choice — its breadth or concentration. It is naturally more difficult to assess subjective reactions and to find qualitative change or growth. Opinions may be the best guide in looking at the picture after another year, but the facts will be available.

Significantly, in June 1973, after it had reviewed the portfolios of 200 students who had completed two years of work, the Board on Academic Standards, in a formal report, said:

"After ten days of immersion in portfolios, the board is unanimous in thinking that the chief educational value of the system lies in the study plan and the annual evaluation. We sensed in these two documents a genuineness, a growth in insight, a responsibility for putting one's education together in terms of past and future, a direction towards an after-college goal — in short, an authentication of education in the radical sense.

"The portfolios on the whole were carefully and intelligently prepared; they were a pleasure and sometimes a delight to study. The level of the work seemed generally satisfactory, sometimes distinguished."

The director of advising also submitted a report at the end of June 1973. He stated:

"The new advising program was eminently successful, particularly with the first year students — many of whom had entered the college because they were attracted by the portfolio system. As was to be expected, second-year students found the transition to the new program somewhat more difficult. However, all the evidence indicates that with the passing of each year and the ever-growing percentage of students who have come to Manhattanville precisely because of the new program, the advising program should continue and even increase its successes. It is nonetheless clear at the end of the first year of full-scale operation that there are a number of problems which require further planning and work."

Some adjustments in the plan will be made in 1973-74 where, as mentioned, there are areas of concern and also of yet unresolved issues. Likely other adjustments will be necessary from time to time. Much work remains to be done.

Manhattanville is sensitive to the need in this changing world to teach young people to be individuals and to think, so that they may grow into citizens capable of dealing with the realities of their world. Its efforts and its energies are directed under the Manhattanville Plan to providing a qualitative educational experience that will meet the challenges of this mission.

THE PLAN IN THE PERSPECTIVE
OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Manhattanville College does not act as an advocate for its plan in presenting this report. It is aware that there are still many problems to be solved. Answers are still to be found. One set of possibilities is in operation on the assumption that it forms a cohesive pattern, based on philosophic convictions concerning the learning process and its goals. This particular set — which is the Manhattanville Plan — may not yield the results anticipated. As the program goes forward, other means may be adopted. It is recognized that this is an endeavor about which too little is known and about which many questions remain — how do people learn, how many ways are there to learn, how are people motivated and how can they use their education to humanize their own lives and their world.

Today Manhattanville has a new group of students. Those who worked so hard to help bring about the reforms are no longer on campus. They are out in the “world” where, it is hoped, they are better qualified to deal with the change in which they are inevitably immersed. But there are other conditions exerting pressures on the educational process today. Changing winds are still blowing across the land, creating new climates of opinion. A conservatism, a longing to return to the old and the familiar, a withdrawal from the tumult, the pressures, the ugliness of society's violence and speed; these attitudes are prevalent everywhere but nowhere more obvious than on the college campus. The inconsistencies and uncertainties of society make it imperative that the college develop people of independence, of reason and of responsible leadership.

Fortunately — along with uneasiness — there is a new searching, an eagerness to find meaning in life and to live it well. Materialistic goals are being severely questioned and puritanical principles have been soundly attacked. The search is for better answers. The new plan formulated at Manhattanville is intentionally an effort in this direction.

The Manhattanville Plan should be viewed in the perspective of what others are doing concerning reform in higher education. Only

in this way can it be determined whether the plan is "revolutionary" and "radical," whether it is unique and, in short, where it stands vis-a-vis the programs of other institutions.

Current experiments in higher education — student-designed curricula, off-campus learning, nongraded evaluation, interdisciplinary and problem-oriented courses, technology and departure from the two-terms-a-year-for-four-years requirement — have been shaped by the kinds of institutions supporting them. The frankly experimental and new private colleges give planners a virtually free hand in designing procedures that exemplify new philosophies of education. Preeminent among those which have survived and prospered to date are Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, Antioch, New College in Sarasota, Florida, and Hampshire.

Then there are experimental components of larger systems — such as Johnston College at the University of Redlands, the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, New College at the University of Alabama, the Inner College of the University of Connecticut and Tufts College Within, as well as the now defunct Bensalem College of Fordham University and Tressman's program at Berkeley—which were formed during the last decade for the purposes of serving new student needs and of providing laboratories for limited, boundaried educational experimentation. The degree of their autonomy ranges from all-but-total independence to the status of a carefully controlled experiment with a specified life span, but all have had assistance from their sponsoring institutions.

Finally, there are the private liberal arts colleges which are adapting their educational program in response to changes in their constituency, in society and in higher education. Among these are Whittier, Brown, Dartmouth, Austin, Trinity at Hartford, Hobart and William Smith — and Manhattanville. Some experiments have been limited, granting credit for off-campus learning or suffering a small number of independent studies. Others have been fundamental, touching every aspect of college life.

Experimentation in private liberal arts colleges, to a greater extent than in other kinds of institutions, has been dictated by financial necessity as well as by the desire for academic reform. While it

may be true that prospects of bankruptcy can goad an institution into changes in ways that a decade of prosperity never could, change from financial pressure can lead to ill-conceived plans which are either too timid and spotty to make much difference, too unpalatable for faculty and student acceptance or too grandiose for realistic support. The financial imperative is a double-edged sword and places a college with limited resources on its mettle to be bold, but not too bold. Prudence is the byword when the alternative to successful reform is not a return to the old ways but rather institutional extinction.

Another factor which distinguishes reform in the small liberal arts college from experiments elsewhere is its student body. Many small liberal arts colleges attract students with a rather structured, albeit "personal," educational background from small established private schools. Simply making student-designed majors available to them is likely to have little impact. Abolishing all requirements can prove devastating. While many schools have begun granting the able and determined student a certain amount of leeway in charting a particular course of study, most students — in fact, most people — need help, if only because they have been accustomed to equating learning with the fulfillment of educational requirements. Independence cannot be created overnight.

The Critical Freshman Year

In response, many revised curricular plans offer a combination of a "core" freshman program stressing "integrative, problem-oriented" seminars and a renewed emphasis on advising. Although programs vary from school to school, their objectives are common: to introduce the student to the institution's resources, including off-campus possibilities; to help him identify those abilities and interests he wants to pursue; to work with him on his special learning problems — and frequently to expose him to interdisciplinary learning before he plunges into a more specialized field of concentration. Dartmouth, Brown, Hampshire, Sarah Lawrence and Austin all have done some experimentation of this type.

The "Dartmouth Plan" highlights independent study and re-

quires each student to submit a plan of study at the end of his freshman year, but builds in no departure from the usual pattern of freshman study. Whittier College asks freshmen to explore a variety of subjects and emphasizes faculty advising. Brown has initiated interdisciplinary "Modes of Thought" courses and is studying how best to make faculty advising in the "transitional freshman year" both effective and economically feasible.

Other colleges have developed entirely new sequences of required freshman courses. Some, as in the case of Ottawa University and of Hampshire College, require freshmen to take a seminar in each of the three broad divisions (humanities, natural science, social science) as a foundation for interdisciplinary as well as more specialized work in later years. Sarah Lawrence requires all freshmen to take a discipline-based freshman studies course; the teacher is also the student's adviser for at least the freshman year. A similar student-faculty relationship has been established at Austin College, which demands one interdisciplinary freshman course, entitled Communication Inquiry.

New institutions have been freer to plan completely new programs organized around the interdisciplinary type work often found in the "core" freshman seminar. Evergreen State College's integrative, interdisciplinary topic-oriented programs are called Coordinated Studies and, although not absolutely required, are central to all education at the college.

In emphasizing student advisement and the freshman preceptorial, which can, but need not be, interdisciplinary, instead of developing required interdisciplinary freshman courses, Manhattanville is steering a middle course between the plans which replace one set of requirements with another, and those which leave the student almost entirely on his own.

For colleges encouraging individual student-designed curricula, a good system of advising is a *sine qua non*. However, intensive one-to-one relationships are clearly too expensive for most institutions unless adjustments are made either in the forms of instruction or in curricular offerings. Manhattanville may be unique in having counted advising as part of workload, whether as a course or half-

course or by giving the teacher laboratory assistance. While certainly not the total answer or even a very clear one, this is, at best, recognition of the problem and movement towards a solution.

Workload raises the issue of how best to use human resources. Depending on course content and purpose as well as on faculty talents, a better balance between large lecture classes and small group discussion groups can enrich the diversity of educational settings and improve effective utilization of personnel. Educational technology is another means which Manhattanville, like many schools, has used extensively in teaching foreign languages. Manhattanville is only starting to extend this in programmed learning in mathematics and in self-instruction in the French language and a course in French Civilization, but such developments will clearly affect the concept of faculty roles and workloads.

Allowing advanced students to teach can also relieve some pressures on faculty members, as well as provide valid learning experience for the students involved. It can help create the atmosphere of a total community learning, studying and teaching together. "Apprentice teachers," upperclassmen at the University of California at Santa Cruz, teach other undergraduates under supervision of a faculty member. At Sarah Lawrence, students may submit proposals endorsed by two faculty members to the Curriculum Committee to teach courses for which the students enrolled can earn credit.

Efforts of this type have not been undertaken officially at Manhattanville, although approved independent study, proposed by a student and sponsored by a faculty member who will evaluate it, have taken a similar form. Student teaching is fostered by the January interterm Open College, but this is a student creation and is not a "regular" part of the academic program. It extends learning, but not faculty productivity.

Student Progress and Evaluation

To keep track of a student's overall course of study, some of the colleges examined ask for an educational plan, which is usually presented at the end of the freshman year and often checked for

evidence of achievement. It is frequently an official document, and deviation requires approval. In several colleges, such as New College (Florida), Johnston College, Evergreen State, Dartmouth and Hampshire, a student plan may take the shape of a learning contract executed by the student and one or two faculty members over varying periods of time. Manhattanville's educational plan, however, is an unofficial, working statement for the adviser and student. While the statement is in the student's portfolio, it may be changed as the student finds new interests and shifts direction. Eventually, of course, the plan becomes solidified into the transcript, the official record.

In some colleges the student's individual plan concerns only his senior thesis or project. In others, it encompasses his entire course of study, as it does in the Manhattanville program. Generally, when it is an overall plan, it is reviewed by a college committee that stands as guardian of academic standards.

The composition of academic review committees varies with curricular plans, and they range from judging senior evaluations to approving students for graduation. Such committees also vary according to the method by which they are constituted. Whereas the Board on Academic Standards at Manhattanville, which judges a student's accomplishments through a portfolio which includes his plan of study, is elected by the faculty, members of the committee at Franconia and at Johnston, as well, are selected by the student; indeed, the Johnston committee includes student membership. Manhattanville's committee must include faculty members from specified areas, but does not yet include students.

When a college — new or old — tries seriously to accommodate the individualism of students and yet insure exposure, if not learning, in several fields to protect the liberal arts concept, it becomes problematic how to gauge the knowledge gained in the several fields. This presumably was previously achieved through distribution requirements. Passing the course meant, "O.K., check that one off." But with more flexibility in requirements, how does one decide the student has learned in areas other than his major?

The original proposal to NEH from Manhattanville recom-

mended comprehensive examinations in the various areas, a method used at Hampshire. However, the Summer task force felt this would set up one more hurdle to clear, nervously, and that it would soon become standardized so that students would gear their studies to the hurdle — like the New York State Regents examinations or the Graduate Record Examinations. In time it was decided to settle for evidence of work done beyond the introductory level in two areas besides that of primary concentration. This would be included in the student portfolio.

It should be noted that Hampshire, which extensively evaluates its new programs, has discovered that some students are not moving through their first-year exams at a satisfactory pace. The college is working to find ways in which faculty members can help students use their first-year course experience more fully in constructing examination questions.

National and state examination systems are spreading and being increasingly advocated, especially for the various external and non-traditional types of study. This is no different, at heart, from colleges' dependence on the College Board exam, as has been long discussed in higher education circles. With the increasing variety in modes of preparation, in credit for life experience, and the development of many nontraditional teaching aids, it is not impossible that one day higher education will find itself with an extensive national examination system ready for export by satellite to international universities. One has already been proposed and chartered for degrees. The British Open University is based on such national examinations, prepared by scholars outside the university. This proof of its academic respectability has held up through the first years of studies.

The concept of national and eventually international measurement may horrify in terms of the conformity it would promulgate but no better solution has been proposed. Instead our institutions have only confidence in their individual standards, with an awareness that the general public may not share this confidence. Thus demands for "accountability" are besetting all institutions, causing

them to prove their functions and accomplishments as educational entities.

The Manhattanville portfolio system for evaluating the achievements of a liberal arts student is primarily for internal institutional use. It is planned to be a rigorous yet individualized option. While it has not yet been tested against a nationally standardized examination system, the education it attempts to encourage should enable the student to deal with such a system. The quality of student accomplishment is certainly one method of accountability.

The question of a national examination system is huge, indeed. Many institutions — experimental and traditional — are facing it and already are using the system in many ways to the advantage of the institution and the student, but without realizing the implications for the future.

Other elements on which Manhattanville may compare its plan with those of others are the year-long calendar to insure full use of the plant — a common trend; the timing of classes to fit the need of adult students as well as residential undergraduates, and the three-year program, which is increasingly accepted because of the better high school preparation of many students and because of the interest manifested by some professional schools in shortening the time of preparation. Many law, medical and business schools are now considering the student with three years of undergraduate study, planning to take him at that point for training in the specialization. The Manhattanville Plan is not out of line with these trends.

Off-campus study and applied research projects are highlighted in almost every campus catalogue, ranging all the way from the traditional year abroad to student-run day-care centers for which students receive credit. This type of educational situation often lends itself to pre-professional or career training. Manhattanville has joined institutions such as the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, Hampshire and the University of California at Santa Cruz in encouraging such learning. With the exceptions of a few departments requiring or encouraging it, field work is generally a question of student choice. However, an office has been set up to locate

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possibilities, particularly in the Westchester area, and to encourage student experience.

There are many more comparisons that could be drawn in detail. But the need is to see Manhattanville in perspective. The conclusion is that Manhattanville is obviously not "radical" or "revolutionary." It is not even daring, compared with some experimental colleges. It is unusual in its ability to make significant changes within the traditional setting which have affected *all* students, not just a "bright" highly motivated elite.

Manhattanville, however, is unique in trying one of the harder paths: the *qualitative* evaluation of student progress. *Quantitative* measurements in numbers of points, credits and cumulative grade average have been removed. Faculty members' evaluations of student work are assessed by faculty serving on the Board on Academic Standards. Manhattanville is willing to check its standards and give the individual student its best as an educational institution. In this way it can be determined whether its brand of idealism can be maintained.

All that has gone before is background. It reveals the crisis faced by Manhattanville, the realization that change was imperative and the steps taken — with the help of monies granted by the National Endowment for the Humanities — to fashion a new method of education for the future. It also provides a frame of reference for the solutions worked out after long months of study and experiment, in comparison with programs going forward in other colleges and universities. There is much pride and no little humility in the title given this new educational program — the Manhattanville Plan.